



Alcohol use increases the risk of cancer

There is convincing evidence that alcohol consumption increases the risk of developing an alcohol-related cancer such as cancers of the:

- mouth
- throat (pharynx and larynx)
- oesophagus
- bowel
- breast
- liver

The level of risk increases with the level of consumption, meaning the more you drink, the greater the risk. Each year in Australia, it is estimated that between 1.9 and 5.8 per cent of all cancers are attributable to consumption of alcohol.

Smoking

The combined effect of smoking and drinking alcohol greatly increases cancer risk, especially cancers of the upper digestive tract (mouth, throat, oesophagus and stomach). The best thing you can do for your health is to quit smoking. Call Quitline today on 13 Quit (13 78 48) for free information, practical assistance and support.

Recommendations

The National Health and Medical Council (NHMRC) recommends drinking no more than two standard drinks on any day to reduce the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol related disease or injury. To help reduce your cancer risk, Cancer Council Queensland encourages individuals to limit their consumption of alcohol. For a copy of the NHMRC guidelines go to www.nhmrc.gov.au/

What is a standard drink?

The Australian measure of a standard drink contains 10 grams of alcohol (equivalent to 12.5 mL of pure alcohol). By law, all bottles, cans and casks containing alcohol must state on the label the number of standard drinks that they contain.

One standard drink equals:

- 100 mL wine (1 bottle = 7 standard drinks)
- 285 mL (1 pot) of full strength beer
- 375 mL (can/stubbie) of mid strength beer
- 425 mL (1 schooner) of low alcohol beer
- 30 mL (1 nip) of spirits
- 60 mL (2 nips) of sherry
- Cocktails may contain more than three standard drinks!

Tips to reduce alcohol consumption:

- Limit alcohol consumption
- Choose drinks with a low or no alcohol content
- Dilute alcoholic drinks, for example a wine spritzer (wine and soda water) or a shandy (beer and sugar-free lemonade)
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks
- Avoid binge drinking
- Use water to quench your thirst and sip alcoholic drinks slowly

Each of these represents one standard drink



**100mL
serve of
wine**



**285mL full
strength
beer pot**



**30mL
spirit nip**

Alcohol and cancer risk

- Eat some food, preferably low in salt, while you drink alcohol
- Set yourself limits and stick to them
- Offer to be the designated driver.

Alcohol and body weight

Alcoholic drinks represent 'empty kilojoules' – that is, alcoholic drinks are high in kilojoules but low in nutritional value, especially when added to sugary mixer drinks. If people drink alcohol, even at low levels, they are liable to gain weight. Being overweight or obese increases your cancer risk, including cancers of the oesophagus, pancreas, bowel, endometrium, kidney and breast (in post-menopausal women).

Action plan to reduce your cancer risk:

- Quit smoking
- Understand your body and get checked
- Eat healthily and drink less alcohol
- Stay SunSmart every day
- Take time to be active

For further information and advice:

- **Cancer Council Queensland 13 11 20 Monday to Friday, 9am - 5pm**
- Cancer Council Queensland website www.cancerqld.org.au
- National Health and Medical Research Council. *Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol*. www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines/publications/ds10

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The information in this publication should not be used as a substitute for advice from a properly qualified medical professional who can advise you about your own individual medical needs. It is not intended to constitute medical advice and is provided for general information purposes only. Information on cancer, including the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer is constantly being updated and revised by medical professionals and the research community.

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